

Church: Cerne Already Forgiven

While Gregory Cerne will have to deal with the legal ramifications of burning a cross at the entrance of Holy Family Church, he has already received spiritual absolution.

Following Cerne's arraignment on Wednesday, Monsignor William Glynn, who first discovered the eight-foot, charred cross at the church, issued a statement calling the incident "a painful experience for our parish and its parishioners."

"I truly do not believe that it was a hate crime," said Msgr. Glynn. "In the spirit of our faith, we extend our forgiveness to Gregory and pray that he will be able to forgive himself."

While Msgr. Glynn was out of town for the remainder of the week for a funeral, leaders of the church echoed his sentiments following Cerne's release from custody.

Father Andrew Johnson said that Msgr. Glynn was called to the police station at 3 p.m. on Tuesday after Duxbury police arrested and charged Cerne with the crime. What followed, said Father Johnson, was a "moving, pastoral moment" and "a moment of forgiveness."

"This poor kid showed himself to be sorry and Msgr. Glynn being who he is was completely forgiving," said Father Johnson.

Upon his return to the church, he said, Msgr. Glynn received a voicemail message from Cerne's mother and left his own message to the family in return and instructed Father Johnson and Father Frank Chase to visit the family on Wednesday, which they did, but the family was at court at the time.



Officials at Holy Family Church have already forgiven Cerne for leaving a burning cross at the entrance of their house of worship.

"We went to the house and told the workmen there to convey for us our feelings of support and that if there was anything we could do to help the family, they should just call us," said Father Johnson.

Concerning Judge Gregory Baler's granting of a stay away order for Cerne, which can be lifted by the church, Father Johnson said he has not discussed the matter with Msgr. Glynn, but was inclined to believe that Cerne would absolutely be welcomed back to his parish with open arms.

"Msgr. Glynn asked the police to drop the hate crime charges, but the police were not willing to do so," said Father Johnson. "So I can only assume that Msgr. Glynn would welcome him back here. There is no doubt in my mind that something else was going on besides a hate crime here. There are a lot of things in the human heart we don't understand."

Father Johnson added that Msgr. Glynn officiated at Cerne's confirmation three years ago at the church and that his "heart was broken that a child could get so confused to do this."

"What family, what parent, what couple doesn't understand what it is like to have a child make a stupid decision?" he said.

Sympathy for Cerne's actions has also come from the Duxbury No Place for Hate Committee. Chairwoman Ellen Erdwein Berall said last week that while there is still no information as to the young man's motive, they concur with the church on the nature of the incident.

"Msgr. Glynn believes that this was not a hate crime, so we are not considering this a hate crime as a committee," she said. "We have made ourselves available to the church for support or for anyone involved in this."

—Keith L. Marti